

THE AUSTRALIAN VEHICLE DEALER'S

NEWS SOURCE

autotalk

MARCH 2023

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AUTOMOTIVE
VETERAN
RETIRES**

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BIG CHANGE IN ONLINE AUTO MARKET



ROBERT BARRY
EDITOR AUTOTALK

Hello there,

As this March issue of **AutoTalk** goes to print and goes online I'll be on annual leave meeting members of my family from Britain in sunny Orlando, Florida for a week of theme park fun, before flying back to Houston and taking a six-day road tour of Texas.

Taking some much-needed time out to reflect personally and recharge the body and soul is incredibly important, especially given the events of the past couple of years.

No, I don't plan on driving anything special while I'm there, it will be whatever generic rental cars Enterprise serves up in Orlando and Houston.

In spite of the pandemic and turbulence of the past few years, people still appear to be buying new vehicles in large numbers in Australia and New Zealand.

And international air travel though exorbitantly more expensive is in high demand and long-haul flights are fully subscribed if my experience is anything to go by.

Closer to home the competition for consumer eyeballs is heating up between the online automotive marketplaces such as AutoTrader, CarSales, CarsGuide, Drive, CarExpert, Gumtree Cars.

This is another area of media that has weathered some turbulence in the past few years.

Gumtree Australia (EBay Classifieds Group) acquired AutoTrader and CarsGuide in May 2020 from Cox Automotive Media Solutions following a clearance to do so from the

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission.

Then in June 2020, Norway-based classified specialist, Adevinta, acquired the global operations of the EBay Classifieds Group, including the Australian brands, Gumtree, AutoTrader and Carsguide.

All went swimmingly until October last year when The Market Herald acquired CarsGuide AutoTrader Media Solutions Limited. That saw the departure of chief marketing officer **Manisha Seewal**, after just 12 months in the role.

It was a surprise move by the Western Australia-based media company and one that caught many on the hop.

Now the latest manoeuvre in this space has seen Australian Community Media (ACM), an independent rural and regional media group, drop its syndication of Drive which is owned by the Nine Media organisation, in favour of another independent player **CarExpert.com.au**.

People who follow the machinations of the many automotive websites that publish news and reviews and offer classified links, will note that the founders of CarExpert, are the same people who founded CarAdvice which Nine bought outright in 2018.

The new ACM deal means that Nine loses nearly five million eyeballs from syndication in rural and regional Australia, and it's quite the coup for the team at CarExpert.

I wish them all the best of luck, it's an extremely competitive market.

Enjoy your reading this month.

Best regards,

Robert Barry
EDITOR AUTOTALK



FLYNN RETIRES FROM STELLANTIS, FILAZZOLA APPOINTED MD

Stellantis has appointed **Michael Filazzola** as Australia managing director for Jeep, Alfa Romeo, Fiat Professional, and Abarth.

He starts the job on March 20.

Announcing the appointment, Stellantis' senior vice president, India and Asia Pacific region **Billy Hayes**, says Filazzola has proven leadership capabilities and a diverse skillset.

"We're confident that Michael will continue to drive the growth and success of the Stellantis business in Australia," he says.

Filazzola has worked in the automotive and aftermarket industries for more than 28 years, in Australia, China, and Southeast Asia.

He's held senior executive roles in sales, aftersales, customer experience, purchasing and supply chain, and worked in product development at General Motors, Holden Australia, and Bapcor.

Most recently, he was Bapcor's product development general manager, overseeing the growth of private brands within the aftermarket industry.

"I'm looking forward to joining Stellantis and working with the team across its robust suite of brands.

"With the company focus moving towards electrification, and a new generation of vehicles from all brands being launched into the market, I feel like this is a great time to join Stellantis," Filazzola adds.

He replaces **Kevin Flynn** who, after 47 years in automotive, is retiring to spend more time with his family in South Africa.

For more than three decades, Flynn worked in multiple countries and for brands including Lexus, BMW, Jaguar Land Rover and Porsche.

In 2015, he joined Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) to lead its team in India where he was responsible for the overall development of the Jeep brand.

He also established Jeep's export strategy for all right-hand drive markets.

Under his leadership, Jeep was voted



MICHAEL FILAZZOLA



KEVIN FLYNN

India's most trusted automotive brand by the 2019 Brand Trust Report.

Flynn joined the Australian team as leader in August 2019, to focus on improving product quality and

customer satisfaction. He navigated the challenges of the global pandemic while achieving growth for Stellantis in the market.



EV depreciation is scary if you pick the wrong brand

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Matt Campbell



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Fast food giant Subway building EV charging network

Jade Credentino



Car Expert

EV depreciation is scary if you pick the wrong brand

Alborz Fallah

Car Expert

2023 Ford F-150 price and specs

Jack Quick



Car Expert

Ford F-150 now on sale and it's cheaper than we expected

Scott Collie



ACM DROPS DRIVE IN FAVOUR OF CAREXPERT

New car marketplace and publisher **CarExpert.com.au** has formed a new partnership with Australia Community Media (ACM), home to more than 100 Australian digital and print mastheads.

The partnership sees ACM replace existing Drive branding and content with CarExpert.

CarExpert was founded by **Alborz Fallah**, **Paul Maric** and **Anthony Crawford** in April 2020, the same team that founded CarAdvice, which in 2018 was bought by Nine which owns Drive. The partnership will see CarExpert's content syndicated across ACM's network of more than 100 digital and

print mastheads extending CarExpert's automotive content to more than 4.9 million regional and rural Australians.

"As independents ourselves, it's a union that's aligned on common values and one which we're both confident will enhance reach, consumption and importantly, trust, for both parties", says CarExpert chief executive **Damon Rielly**.

"We believe the partnership further cements CarExpert as the destination for everything Australians need to know about new cars, adding to our record-breaking YouTube channel, our existing alliance with Seven West Media and the millions who visit **CarExpert.com.au**

monthly.

"Not only does this increase CarExpert's value offering for consumers, it enables our content to help more people make confident decisions when buying their next new car."

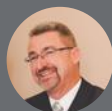
ACM managing director **Tony Kendall** says the partnership enables both companies to use their strengths and engage with audiences in new and innovative ways.

"Together, we'll publish compelling content to inform, engage and inspire millions of readers each month," he says.

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8/152 Quay Street, P.O. Box 10 50 10,
Auckland City, NZ 1030.



EDITOR – AUTOTALK AUSTRALIA
Robert Barry
+64 21 530 902
robert@automediagroup.co.nz



ASSISTANT EDITOR
Geoff Dobson
+64 21 881 823
geoff@automediagroup.co.nz



MANAGING EDITOR
Richard Edwards
+64 21 556 655
richard@automediagroup.co.nz



BUSINESS MANAGER
Dale Stevenson
+64 21 446 214
dale@automediagroup.co.nz



GROUP GENERAL MANAGER
Deborah Baxter
+64 27 530 5016
deborah@automediagroup.co.nz



PUBLISHER / CHAIR
Vern Whitehead
+64 21 831 153
vern@automediagroup.co.nz

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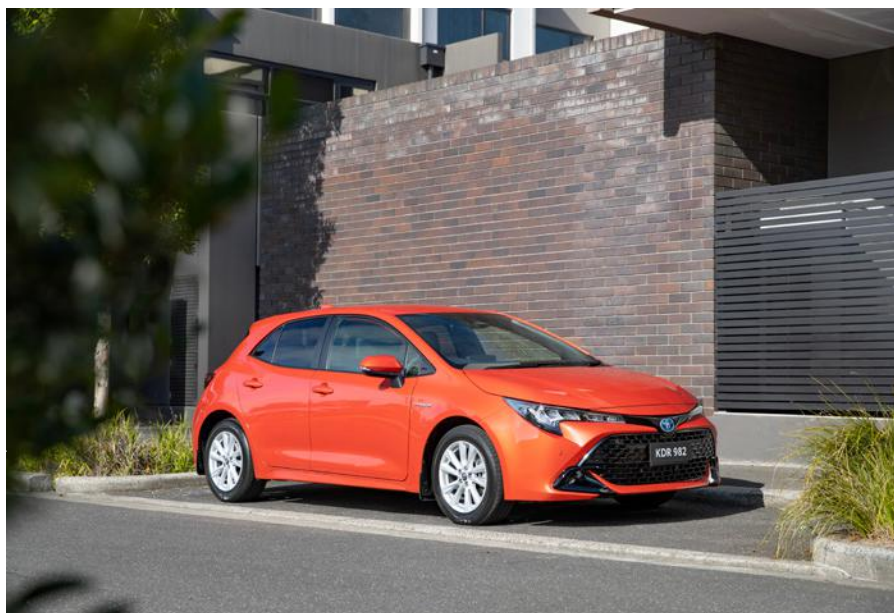
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9000 COROLLAS RECALLED FOR CAMERA REPROGRAMMING

Toyota Australia (TMCA) is recalling 9100 Corollas to rectify software programming affecting the forward recognition camera.

As of February 20, 2023, about 206 of them are held by TMCA and its dealers and will be reprogrammed before delivery to customers.

The vehicles involved are equipped with a Toyota Safety Sense (TSS) 3.0 system, containing a millimetre wave radar sensor and a forward recognition camera to detect objects for driver assistance features, including the Pre-Collision System (PCS).

Because of programming of software in the forward recognition camera, there's a possibility that TSS functions could become inoperative for about four seconds before rebooting and becoming operational again.

Toyota dealers will update the

software for owners free of charge, and it will require 40 minutes to an hour to do the work.

However, depending on the dealer's work schedule, owners may be required to make the vehicle available for longer.

Toyota Australia will contact owners of involved vehicles to provide details of this recall. Customers are asked to keep their contact details up to date with Toyota so future communications can be received.

Customers with additional questions or concerns can contact their local/preferred Toyota dealer in the first instance or the **Toyota Service Campaign Helpline on 1800 987 366 (Mon-Fri 8.00am-6.00pm AEDT)**. Please quote the car's 17-digit Vehicle Identification Number (VIN).

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TICKELL TO LEAD CARTELUX IN AMERICA

Australian ad-tech company, Cartelux, is expanding its business into the United States, Canada and Latin America following its success in Europe and Asia Pacific.

It says now is the perfect time to move into the world's second-largest car market where there are more than 18,000 new car dealerships in the US.

Matthew Tickell who has more than 15 years' experience in the management of automotive dealerships and automotive software providers, will lead the Cartelux operation in the Americas.

Most recently he was director of sales and equity partner with e-GoodManners, an automotive software provider throughout Asia Pacific specialising in CRM and marketing for dealers and OEMs.

"I've always had a passion for designing and implementing software solutions that assist OEMs to grow their brand and manage their network while improving the customer experience," he says.

"Cartelux is by far the most innovative, value-adding, and cost-effective marketing solution I have seen.

"Understanding the US mentality of 'Think Big, Think Forward', I'm confident the Cartelux solution will be well adopted as the perfect platform for centralising dealer marketing programs across sales, finance and aftersales.

Cartelux founder and chief executive **Joshua Williams** says that from the USA's West Coast, Cartelux will start to develop the US and Canadian markets.

"Our business has been globally scalable from the beginning and now we're rolling out that capability.

"Our US engagement also allows us to establish a footprint in the world's biggest equity market.

"After North America and Canada we'll add the LATAM market in the second half of this year to complete a global reach," he adds.

Cartelux is seeing significant growth in APAC and Europe with key personnel joining the executive team, including **Hervé Genin**, general manager EMEA and **Kristin Harder**, global head of



MATTHEW TICKELL

strategy and partnerships.

Williams founded the company in 2020 to simplify digital advertising. Based on the Sunshine Coast, it operates easy-to-use platforms to create, amplify and measure local digital campaigns.

Williams says Cartelux gives small media spenders access to professional campaigns and empowers them

to participate in the global digital knowledge pool.

The platform allows for smooth integrations, and the product offering spans the digital advertising landscape including the google and meta ad tool sets.



MTA NSW AND INSURANCE PARTNERSHIP FOR AUTO INDUSTRY

The Motor Traders' Association of NSW (MTA NSW) has partnered with insurance broker and risk adviser, Marsh, to launch a tailored insurance program for the NSW automotive industry.

The partnership intends helping automotive businesses secure a tailored, cost-effective product to meet their business needs.

For MTA NSW members and the wider industry, this will mean gaining access to a range of customised insurance solutions and risk advisory services, including enterprise risk assessments, cyber risk profiling, fraud risk reviews and awareness training, workplace health and safety programs, claims management support, help with business continuity plan development, and asset valuations, says MTA NSW.

"With risks becoming more complex,

insurance premiums are rising, with global commercial insurance prices up 9% in the second quarter of 2022," it adds.

"MTA NSW's partnership with Marsh will ensure the automotive industry has better access to appropriate, affordable and competitive insurance cover for their needs, alongside guidance for business owners to ensure they are fully supported when lodging claims."

Marsh affinity head **Kirsten Mills** says commercial premiums are following the wider price rise trend and often businesses can be too time-poor to find the most appropriate coverage.

The partnership provides a pivotal step towards ensuring all MTA members can access expert recommendations and support to protect their businesses, she says.

MTA NSW chief executive **Stavros**

Yallouridis says the insurance program will put power back into the hands of automotive businesses to find policies that work for them.

"Having the right insurance is a non-negotiable for any automotive business and it's important that our members know how to find affordable and appropriate cover for their needs," he says.

"By partnering with Marsh, MTA NSW is in the unique position to assist automotive business owners find more affordable policies, without sacrificing the quality of their coverage."

MTA will offer a suite of insurance products including material loss or damage, business interruption, public and product liability, burglary, and professional risk.

SYDNEY SPARKS A SHIFT TO ZERO EMISSIONS

Doubling EV chargers in City of Sydney carparks, trialling low-impact on-street charging and a research project to help retrofit existing buildings with chargers are among the first actions in the city's new EV strategy.

The draft Electrification of Transport in the City Strategy and Action Plan, passed unanimously for public exhibition by the city council, outlines plans to electrify transport fleets and lower barriers to EV use.

Key actions arising from the plan include accelerating the transition of the city's own light and heavy vehicle fleet and increasing depot capacity to handle more and bigger EVs.

Also on the list are encouraging installation of public rapid chargers in carparks and service stations, increasing the capacity and number of electric chargers in city-controlled carparks, and working with Ausgrid to trial low-impact on-street charging in locations without off-street options.

The plan recommends updating planning controls to encourage charging capacity in new buildings and doing comprehensive research to understand the challenges and opportunities of retrofitting existing apartment buildings with chargers.

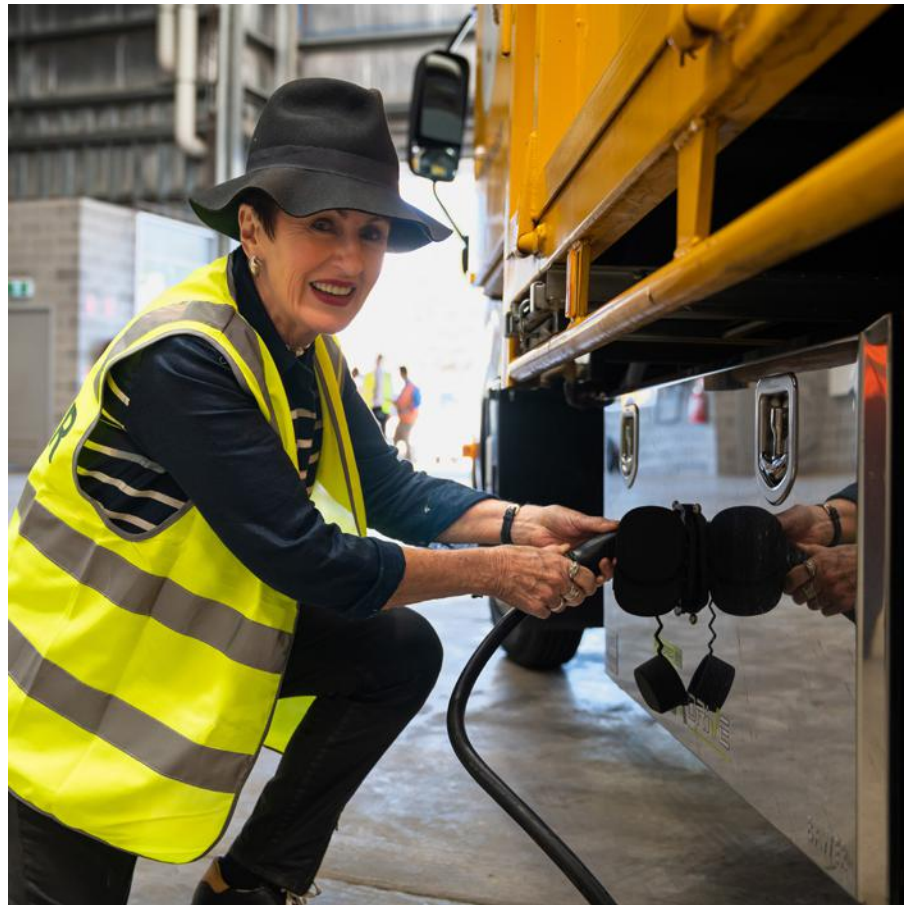
Lord mayor **Clover Moore** says reducing people's private vehicle dependence while supporting vehicle electrification would help lower transport emissions and reach the city's net zero targets.

"If we're to stop dangerous runaway climate change, we need to reach net-zero emissions as soon as possible," he says.

"Lowering transport emissions, which are currently around 20% of all our emissions, will be crucial to this task."

Moore says the city remains "focused on delivering our comprehensive bike network, supporting ambitious public transport projects and ensuring our city is a pleasant and accessible place to walk to, from and around".

"Not all trips can be completed on a bike or public transport so electrification of high-impact fleets such as delivery and service vehicles, as well as private vehicles, will help complete the journey to net zero



transport."

Under the new plan, the city will increase capacity in Goulburn Street and Kings Cross carparks to 18 chargers, with another two 22kWh chargers in Cope Street carpark in Redfern and Wilson Street carpark in Newtown.

The City of Sydney is also working with Ausgrid to test an unobtrusive on-street EV charger on an existing power pole in Glebe to explore ways to provide on-street charging without spoiling the neighbourhood.

During coming months, the City of Sydney will investigate the challenges communities face as they start to address increasing demand to retrofit apartment buildings with EV charging.

"In the city context, where over 75% of people live in apartments, strata charging presents a real opportunity to make a significant dent in our charging needs, but it's complicated," says Moore.

"Many of these apartments have off-street parking spaces and we know that most of them will look to charge their electric vehicles in those spaces."

The City of Sydney will support the state and federal governments to encourage a faster uptake of private and commercial EVs through federal fuel efficiency standards, accelerating roll-out of zero emission buses, and pricing that favours EVs over internal combustion engines (ICE) and subsidies that favour e-bikes over vehicles.

City of Sydney's fleet includes 20 EVs and 73 hybrid cars and trucks.

"We hope that by 2035 all vehicles in our area are electric," says Moore.

"This is a sector that's evolving quickly, and we want to make sure that we remove any possible barrier to our residents getting an electric vehicle or better still, changing their commute for a bus or train, an e-bike or choosing to walk."

The state government has committed to installing 500 EV charging bays across New South Wales during the next two years, with a few in the first round being installed in Sydney.



*Overseas model shown

PEUGEOT CONFIRMS ARRIVAL OF FIRST EV FOR AUSTRALIA

Peugeot Australia is set to take the next steps towards electrification with the arrival of the e-Partner Van, in the first half of this year.

It's Peugeot's first fully electric vehicle on sale in Australia and is a further progression of its commitment to electrified LCVs, passenger cars and SUVs.

Peugeot Australia LCV range includes the Partner, Expert and Boxer models. The Partner small van is available in short-wheelbase and long-wheelbase forms. The e-Partner will be introduced locally as one long-wheelbase variant.

Based on the EMP2 (Efficient Modular Platform) multi-energy modular platform, the e-Partner has a 100%

“We're confident that the arrival of our first electric vehicle will provide new avenues for growth for the brand as well as further choice for LCV customers wanting to make the move to electric.”

electric engine with a maximum power output of 100kW and peak torque of 260Nm. It's available with a lithium-ion battery with a capacity of 50kWh.

“The launch of the e-Partner will build on our electrified range in Australia that currently consists of the 3008 SUV and 508 GT Fastback plug-in hybrid variants and will soon welcome the 308 GT Sport Hatch and 508 GT Sportswagon plug-in hybrid variants,” says Peugeot Australia

managing director **Kate Gillis.**

“We're confident that the arrival of our first electric vehicle will provide new avenues for growth for the brand as well as further choice for LCV customers wanting to make the move to electric.”

Providing a workspace that helps make everyday life easier, the new e-Partner retains the robust style and design features of the combustion versions.

Full Australian specifications and pricing will be released closer to the on-sale date.

Customers can now register their interest in the e-Partner either with their local Peugeot retailer or by visiting: <https://www.peugeot.com.au/e-partner-van-register-your-interest.html>



AMPOL REPORTS RECORD EARNINGS

Australian fuel company Ampol has posted a record full year operating profit of \$1316.5 million for the year to December 31, 2022 – up 124%.

The replacement cost operating profit (RCOP) before interest and tax includes \$1269.0 million from continuing operations (which excludes Gull's contribution).

Its statutory net profit after tax (NPAT) of \$795.9m is a 42% increase on 2021 and Ampol reported its best convenience retail earnings in five years, up 37% on 2021.

"2022 has been another very successful year for Ampol as the integrated supply chain combined to deliver a record financial result and supported the declaration of record shareholder dividends," says managing director and chief executive **Matt Halliday**.

"At the same time, we're continuing to deliver on our strategic priorities.

"The rebrand to Ampol is now complete, we've achieved the Convenience Retail non-fuel RCOP EBIT uplift target ahead of schedule and the acquisition of Z Energy has delivered on our international growth ambitions," he adds.

"We remain disciplined with our allocation of capital, prioritising shareholder returns as we strive to get the balance right between core

business optimisation and targeted investment in the energy transition to meet the evolving needs of our customers.

"These outcomes were supported by strong operational performances and the dedication of the entire Ampol team who have continued to deliver for our customers while responding to the challenges caused by the rebalancing of global energy markets, extreme weather events and COVID outbreaks."

Eight months of trading by Z Energy post-acquisition contributed \$124.6 million RCOP EBIT to the Ampol Group result, after Purchase Price Accounting adjustments, and 2.76 billion litres of total fuel sales volume.

Since the closure of New Zealand's only refinery, Z Energy has made good progress in managing the transition to a full import model with minimal disruption to customers.

The exit from the National Inventory Agreement saw Z Energy gain share in the New Zealand market as it benefited from its superior infrastructure position.

The management team continued to progress the synergies and performance improvements outlined at the time of acquisition.

To date, NZ\$22 million of synergies have been delivered in 2022 for an annualised run rate of NZ\$55 million.

Ampol has reached a final settlement with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) in relation to the Australian corporate tax treatment of earnings by Ampol's Singaporean businesses (Ampol Singapore) from transactions with Ampol's Australian entities (Ampol Australia).

The settlement relates to the financial years ended December 31, 2014–22 after Ampol approached the ATO in 2014 about its operations in Singapore.

As a result of the settlement, Ampol will pay a further \$5.6 million in tax on earnings between 2014 and 2021, in addition to the \$104.1m already paid in relation to these matters.

In June 2023, Ampol will pay \$48.2 million in tax on earnings in the 2022 financial year in relation to these matters, in line with normal tax payment dates. No penalties have been imposed on Ampol.

As a result of the settlement, a write-back of excess tax provisions totalling \$110.2m has been included as a reduction in tax expense in the 2022 full year results and further recognised as a Significant Item.

From January 1, most Ampol Singapore earnings from transactions with Ampol Australia will be subject to corporate income tax of 30%.



Pre-production vehicle specifications and images shown. Specifications and features on production model may vary.

FORD OPENS ORDERS FOR F-150S

Ford Australia dealers have opened their order books for the F-150 pick-up truck which arrives in showrooms later this year, backed with a five-year unlimited kilometre warranty.

Ford has announced pricing and specification for the four variant range just as the first production vehicles leave Dearborn, USA, bound for RMA Automotive in Melbourne where they'll be re-manufactured into right-hand drive vehicles.

The F-150 range starts from \$106,950 plus on-road costs, with variants including short-wheelbase (SWB) and long-wheelbase (LWB) XLT and Lariat models.

With its 4.5 tonne towing ability, the F-150 ensures "Aussies can go anywhere, with almost anything, at any time," Ford spokesman says.

The F-Series' reintroduction comes after significant consumer demand for it.

It has had extensive re-engineering by Ford Australia and RMA Automotive.

"As a full-size American pick-up, the F-150 is joining Australian showrooms thanks to an extensive local re-

engineering program," says Ford Australia F-150 assistant chief program engineer **Tom Dohrmann**.

"Together with RMA Automotive, Ford Australia developed a world-first right-hand drive program for the F-150.

"We set ourselves the target of equivalency without compromise and are incredibly proud to have achieved this to our exacting standards, while offering our customers generous standard specification."

The XLT and Lariat F-150s feature the 3.5-litre EcoBoost Twin-Turbo V6 petrol engine, coupled with a 10-speed automatic gearbox in 4x4 Crew Cab configuration.

With 298kW and 678Nm across the range, the F-150 produces strong torque across its rev range.

Technology that delivers the wide torque band includes Ford's port-fuel and direct-injection (PFDI) system, which uses a pair of injectors per cylinder along with twin-intercooled turbochargers that offer on-demand power while minimising lag.

Each F-150 variant can be bought with either a SWB 3683mm wheelbase and

1676mm style-side box, or as a LWB that extends the wheelbase to 3987mm and style-side box to 1981mm. All Australian F-150s can tow 4.5 tonnes.

On the F-150 XLT, standard features include 20-inch six-spoke machined-aluminium wheels, chrome front and rear bumpers, black platform running boards, tailgate with flexible step and work surface, and a Tough Bed spray-in bedliner.

The F-150 XLT SWB retails at \$106,950, while the XLT LWB is \$107,945.

As the flagship of the Australian range, the F-150 Lariat provides customers with high levels of luxury.

Additional features over the XLT, include premium mesh insert grille with chrome surround, chrome appearance package including mirror shells, door handles, belt mouldings, tow hooks and running boards, powered twin-panel moonroof and LED headlights, foglights and taillights.

The F-150 Lariat SWB sells for \$139,950, while the LWB Lariat retails at \$140,945.

MOTORING AWARD SEASON HITS HIGH GEAR

BY ROBERT BARRY

Another season of local and international car of the year awards has started with some predictable and some so not predictable results.

Winning a car of the year award of any sort is manna from heaven for carmakers as it offers third-party advocacy for their product and provides publicity and marketing opportunities.

For example the jury of the Women's World Car of the Year (WWCOTY) 2023 has awarded Nissan X-Trail the Best Large SUV 2023 for its 13th edition.

The WWCOTY jury also awarded the title of best urban model to the Kia Niro, best family SUV went to the Jeep Avenger, best large car went to the Citroen C5 X, best performance car to the Audi RS 3 and best 4x4 to the Ford Ranger.

The WWCOTY is the only international award judged solely by women automotive journalists, and praised the new X-Trail's spaciousness, driving performance and electrified powertrain, e-Power.

Nissan chief executive **Makoto Uchida** says Nissan took "the voices of our female customers into consideration throughout the design and development process".

"So, we're particularly proud that the jury of eminent female automotive journalists from all over the world has recognised the X-Trail's talents."

Nissan says the X-Trail is one of its most successful global vehicles, and has been sold in more than 100 markets for more than 20 years.

After being awarded Best Large SUV, the X-Trail has been shortlisted for the highest award of the WWCOTY, Best Car of the Year 2023.

RAM trucks star in Ute of the Year awards.

CarExpert.com.au's inaugural Ute of the Year awards focused on the dual cab ute, which accounts for 21% of all new Australian vehicle sales, in a set of gruelling real-world tests.

The awarded categories were best performance; best off-road; best dyno, and best towing.



Within each category there was an overall winner presented to the best in its class, best value based on features and price, and best four-cylinder.

The Ram 1500 Laramie was awarded the Best Performance and Best Towing category, while the 6.2-litre supercharged Hemi Ram TRX took the mantle of Australia's quickest dual cab ute.

"We're proud to present an industry award series where winners are selected based on their performance and performance only," says CarExpert.com.au chief executive **Damon Reilly**.

"We have genuinely tested each vehicle, putting them through the wringer to crown the most deserved

winners.

"Being able to award winners in the ute category early in the year means not only do we have the latest and greatest models for testing, but they're readily available for purchase by the consumer," said Reilly.

Judges included senior CarExpert.com.au editorial staff who provided their automotive expertise, supported by the consumer opinion of several **CarExpert.com.au** readers.

The judging represented "an impartial mix of industry professionals and real-world buyers to ensure real winners were awarded based on real test, actual performance and unbiased judgement," Reilly says.

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The judges said the Ram 1500 "not only demonstrated how a hybrid V8 drivetrain can perform in a straight line, but it also boasts incredible stopping ability in damp conditions.

"This model proved not only useful across challenging hillclimbs while towing, but also boasts enough power to move a herculean dyno cell with ease.

"There's no better option than the Ram 1500 for buyers wanting an all-rounder that has towing at the top of its list of capabilities," Reilly says.

Meanwhile, **CarExpert.com.au's** testing, recorded 0-100km/h acceleration for the Ram TRX of 4.4 seconds, 80-120km/h in 2.8s, and the quarter-mile dash in 12.8s.

WARRIOR NAMED BEST UTE OFF-ROAD; BEST FOUR-CYLINDER

The Nissan Navara PRO-4X Warrior by Premcar has been named Best Ute Off-Road; Best Four-Cylinder in the inaugural **CarExpert.com.au** awards.

The CarExpert judges put seven vehicles to the test in the Best Ute Off Road;

Best Four-Cylinder category, submitting each to challenging terrain, low-grip scenarios, and safety simulations.

CarExpert says each vehicle had to use its traction controls on a 10% gradient that featured rollers embedded in the ground.

It simulated a situation where half the drive wheels had no traction,, and several utes with poor traction controls failed this testing by rolling backwards downhill and requiring driver intervention.

"Our offset mogul test put the four-wheel-drive system to the ultimate test by limiting traction on one front and one rear wheel, forcing the vehicle to apply traction controls to overcome the challenge," Car Expert says.

The final test was a 45% gradient climb on loose rock. Each ute was put into its most aggressive low-range off-road setting to attempt the climb, and several failed to climb the hill successfully.

"Success in this test required a well-tuned four-wheel drive system and

a suitable low-range system to climb with ease," Car Expert says.

The Nissan Navara PRO-4X Warrior by Premcar took the win after outperforming the six other utes.

"Nissan has done a great job of adding off-road features to the Navara PRO-4X Warrior without compromising its core competencies as a work tool," says CarExpert's **Paul Maric**.

"During our 45% gradient loose rock climb test we had to lock both the front and rear differentials in the Ranger Raptor, while the Navara PRO-4X Warrior managed to complete the climb with only the rear differential locked.

"The judges felt the local engineering element also helped create a vehicle better suited to Australian conditions."

The award recognises the Australian engineering and development work done in Nissan and Premcar's Warrior program, which currently includes the Navara PRO- 4X Warrior and Navara SL Warrior, and will soon include the Nissan Patrol Warrior.





POLESTAR EMBRACES NEW DESIGN ERA, OPENS DEDICATED STUDIO

After embracing a new design era with the Polestar 3, Polestar brand has opened a new design studio in Gothenburg, Sweden, nestled in a forest adjacent to its headquarters. The facility employs 120 design team members, led by head of design **Maximilian Missoni**, in an environment that combines modernist architecture with Polestar's clean, minimalistic Scandinavian aesthetic.

Housed in a former Volvo facility completed in 1984 by Italian **Romaldo Giurgola** and local architect **Owe Svärd**, the building has been fully upgraded while maintaining its unique character.

Here, Polestar designers will continue to develop the brand's new design language, previewed by the Polestar Precept and electric roadster concept cars, and carried into production with the Polestar 3.

Materials and details from the original 1980s construction are juxtaposed with modern Scandinavian design from plans drawn up by Missoni.

The new facility includes a specialist showroom area, clay working room, material and colour lab, auditorium and multiple digital studios, management offices, VR rooms and meeting spaces.

"When such care, attention to detail and material quality was so carefully considered at the point of construction back in 1982, it was important to me that we respected the original intentions when integrating our studio into the building," Missoni says.

"We deliberately showcase the original structure and detailing, respecting the very fabric that gives it its unique character.

"But while we wanted to respect tradition, we also wanted this to be a state-of-the-art home for our growing design team.

"So, alongside the glorious views out west of the Gothenburg archipelago, the studio features the latest equipment on the inside to make our jobs easier and produce better results in the most efficient way."

He says the same attention to detail paid to the building runs through Polestar 3.

Aerodynamics were key to shaping the SUV for the electric age, Missoni says.

The overall design, with its powerful and wide stance, and low, sweeping roofline, is introduced by the SmartZone and front aero wing.

Signifying the shift from 'breathing to seeing' as the age of electrification intensifies, Polestar 3 also presented designers with a challenge – to impart a sense of intelligence.

"In today's product design it's quite easy to display emotions like aggression and sportiness in a car. But try conveying intelligence in design – it's not so easy," Missoni says.

"This is something we have spent a lot of time considering, to express the leading technology and sophistication of Polestar 3.

"It is distilled to the essence of an SUV



but at the same time clearly shows a step into a new era."

Though exterior proportions were designed to reflect technology and impart a sporty stance, space inside Polestar 3 has been maximised by the long body (4900 mm) and wheelbase (2984 mm).

Reducing surface volumes around the cabin and increasing occupant space provides a more spacious and enjoyable interior, says Missoni.

Colours and materials have been selected and combined to express Polestar's Scandinavian heritage with a premium look and feel, while addressing sustainability and redefining luxury.

The full-length glass roof contributes to the cabin's airy feel, and Polestar's signature logo is etched between two layers of the laminated glass and visible only when illuminated.

The Polestar 3 goes into production in mid-2023 and first deliveries are expected in the fourth quarter.

EV INDEX LAUNCHED BY AAA

The Australian Automobile Association (AAA) has launched the EV Index, a new online dashboard bringing together seven different data sets describing the technical transition of Australia's vehicle fleet.

The EV Index shows how many EVs are being sold, which manufacturers and vehicle types are attracting consumer attention, geographic distribution of EV registrations, vehicle specifications and international list prices for 26 representative vehicle models.

The AAA has designed the EV Index as

a tool to provide unbiased, credible, and up-to-date data on EV options and patterns of take-up.

It's free to use and will assist potential EV purchasers to narrow down their choices to vehicles that best suit their individual needs, says the AAA.

"It will also be a valuable resource for businesses, policy makers, motoring enthusiasts and anyone wanting more information about the transition of Australia's vehicle fleet."

The EV Index covers sales patterns of light vehicles of all types, battery electric vehicles (BEVs), plug-in hybrid



electric vehicles (PHEVs), conventional hybrids, hydrogen fuel cell EVs (FCEVs) and vehicles with internal combustion engines (ICE).

LSH AUTO AUSTRALIA CONGRATULATES STAFFER FOR 45 YEARS IN INDUSTRY

LSH Auto Brisbane's **John Astin** has clocked up 45 years of continuous service in the business.

It's a "remarkable achievement and a demonstration of his dedication to Mercedes-Benz Brisbane and the teams he has worked with", LSH Auto says.

Astin started in 1978 as an apprentice technician with the then Aust-Star Motors, which within a decade became Mercedes-Benz Brisbane with Astin a qualified technician.

Progressing through service roles to workshop foreman and workshop controller, Astin moved into service administration as a costing clerk, supporting the service business.

Highlights for Astin include the huge

number of different models he has worked on during his time and the technological progress that has accelerated over recent years.

He is also excited to now be working for LSH Auto Australia, a leading Mercedes-Benz retail group.

Astin's long tenure is not only worthy of recognition, but also a great example to those joining the industry who can look forward to a long and rewarding career when with LSH Auto Australia, recognised as one of the AFR Boss Best Places to Work, the company adds.

LSH Auto Australia comprises 10 outlets in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne.

It expanded following successful acquisitions of dealerships from



Daimler AG including Mercedes-Benz Sydney in June 2015, Brisbane in September 2015 and Melbourne in July 2017.

In 2019, LSH Auto sold more than 5400 new vehicles and 6400 pre-owned vehicles across its operations and provided more than 107,000 vehicle services to customers.

MERCEDES-BENZ BUS TO PAUSE SALES IN AUSTRALIA

Mercedes-Benz will stop selling bus and coach models in Australia, according to reports.

Mercedes-Benz Bus confirmed to ABC that it would be pausing operations and sales of new Mercedes bus and coach products in the Australian

market for the foreseeable future, with the Fuso brand unaffected.

It follows news of staff redundancies, although Mercedes says there'll be an ongoing presence available to support existing owners with service and spare parts for years to come while also delivering existing bus and coach



orders.

The brand says it decided to pause sales because planned future products weren't the best fit for Australian operators.



THE CMI ADELAIDE TEAM CELEBRATE A SECOND CONSECUTIVE HINO DEALER OF THE YEAR TITLE.

ADELAIDE DEALERSHIP WINS TOP HINO AWARD

Regency Park business CMI Adelaide has once again been crowned the Hino Metropolitan Dealer of the Year by international truck manufacturer Hino Australia.

"After a tumultuous few years which saw last year's event hosted virtually, it was important for our dealers to gather together and celebrate all of the achievements in 2022," said **Sam Suda**, president and CEO of Hino Australia.

"It is the second consecutive Dealer of the Year title for CMI Hino Adelaide, which is an amazing achievement," he said.

Nathan Chatfield, general manager of CMI Hino Adelaide, paid tribute to his team when accepting the award for the fourth time.

"We are a very proud, long term Hino dealer – Hino is in our blood and our DNA.

"The CMI Hino Adelaide team is such a wonderful group of people who work incredibly hard at everything they do, and this award is a very fitting tribute to their efforts."

CMI Hino Adelaide also won the Service Excellence Award and was a recipient of the prestigious President's Award.

"The 2022 recipients of the President's Award demonstrated excellence in all aspects of Parts, Sales and Service and I congratulate each dealership team for their efforts during 2022," Suda said.

"My sincere thanks to all of the dealers in the Hino network for their efforts to deliver an exceptional experience to all Hino customers during 2022.

"Tonight was all about showing our gratitude to our dealer network, and the night was as prestigious as they

come.

"Congratulations to those whose excellence has been recognised," he said.

Against the backdrop of the Intercontinental Brisbane's Lagoon Beach the 2022 Hino Dealer of the Year awards were held on Saturday, February 24, in a ceremony hosted by Hino Ambassador **Neil Crompton** and attended by 260 guests.

On display at the awards was a replica of the Hino-sponsored #20 Chevrolet Camaro ZL1, which will be raced by Team 18's **Scott Pye** at the Thrifty Newcastle 500 on March 10–12 as part of Hino Australia's long-standing partnership with Supercars Team 18.

2022 HINO DEALER OF THE YEAR RESULTS

Metropolitan Dealer of the Year:

CMI Hino Adelaide, SA

Regional Dealer of the Year:

Sci-Fleet Hino Gold Coast, QLD

Hino Financial Services Dealer of the Year:

Prestige Hino, VIC

President's Award:

Barry Maney Hino, Mt Gambier, SA

Jacob Hino, Albury-Wodonga, NSW-VIC

Sci-Fleet Hino Gold Coast, QLD

CMI Hino Melbourne, VIC

Sci-Fleet Hino Brisbane, QLD

CMI Hino Adelaide, SA

Customer Experience – Sales:

Metropolitan – Adtrans Hino, Sydney, NSW

Regional – Barry Maney Hino, Mt Gambier, SA

Customer Experience – Service:

Metropolitan – Adtrans Hino, Sydney, NSW

Regional – Pacific Hino, Cairns, QLD

SALESPERSON OF THE YEAR

Will Gaulton – Sci-Fleet Hino Brisbane, QLD

Sales Excellence (Metro):

GOLD – City Hino, Sydney, NSW

SILVER – CMI Hino Adelaide, SA

BRONZE – Sci-Fleet Hino Brisbane, QLD

Sales Excellence (Regional):

GOLD – Sci-Fleet Hino Gold Coast, QLD

SILVER – Jacob Hino, Albury-Wodonga, NSW-VIC

BRONZE – Wideland Hino Tamworth, QLD

Parts Excellence (Metro):

GOLD – Sci-Fleet Hino Brisbane, QLD

SILVER – CMI Hino Melbourne, VIC

JOINT BRONZE – Prestige Hino, VIC and Adtrans Hino, NSW

Parts Excellence (Regional):

GOLD – Jacob Hino, Albury-Wodonga, NSW-VIC

SILVER – Sci-Fleet Hino Gold Coast, QLD

BRONZE – Wideland Hino Toowoomba, QLD

Service Excellence (Metro):

GOLD – CMI Hino Adelaide, SA

SILVER – CMI Hino Melbourne, VIC

BRONZE – Sci-Fleet Hino Brisbane, QLD

Service Excellence (Regional):

GOLD – Sci-Fleet Hino Gold Coast, QLD

SILVER – Wideland Hino Toowoomba, QLD

– Southside Truck Centre, Coffs Harbour, NSW

EAGERS AUTOMOTIVE LIMITED POSTS RECORD PROFIT FOR FY22

Eagers Automotive Limited, Australia's leading automotive retail group, has delivered a statutory profit before tax for FY22 of AUD 4.422 billion and a record underlying operating profit before tax of AUD 4.092 billion.

The record financial performance was underpinned by strong demand for new and used cars, sustainable strong return on sales through a reset cost base and ongoing focus on technology-enabled productivity improvements, and the successful acquisition and integration of multi-franchised dealership groups in ACT and South Australia.

CEO **Keith Thornton** attributed the record full-year underlying profit to the strength of ongoing market dynamics combined with the company's reset and more productive operating platform.

He added that the record dividend, which is up 15.3% on the previous year, underlined the Board's confidence in Eagers Automotive's outlook for 2023 and beyond.

Eagers Automotive also reported that its new car order bank grew by 74% in 2022, representing an all-time record level, which will support future strong results.

Thornton said that the industry is at an inflection point, and Eagers Automotive is in a unique position to lead the generational shift towards a lower emission future.

During the period, the company acquired a further AUD 148.3 million of property via the prudent and disciplined allocation of capital to strategic property assets.

Its total property assets at December 2022 were AUD 498 million, up from AUD 483 million at 31 December 2021, excluding assets held for sale.

Looking ahead, Thornton said that Eagers Automotive is focused on several key initiatives to deliver earnings growth, including delivering top-line revenue growth associated with investments, maintaining its sustainable strong return on sales, playing a leading role in the transition to new energy and low emission vehicles, and continuing to



KEITH THORNTON

review accretive and strategic M&A opportunities.

Eagers Automotive's shares on the ASX closed 2.2% higher at AUD 17.69 on Thursday after the announcement of its record financial performance for FY22.

The company also announced its

intention to conduct an on-market share buy-back of up to 10% of issued share capital, reflecting the Board's prudent focus on active capital management and its confidence in the company's strong balance sheet and record available liquidity.



BRISBANE'S NATIONAL 4X4 OUTDOORS SHOW RETURNING

The National 4x4 Outdoors Show is returning to the Brisbane Showgrounds from March 17 to 19.

Showcasing products from the 4x4 aftermarket to the latest in campers, caravans and accessories, outdoor adventure and tourism, and apparel, the event will also feature live entertainment, presentations, and interactive displays.

"With more and more Australians enjoying short, nature-based experiences and outback road trips, and are eager to learn, and equip themselves correctly, the National 4x4 Outdoors Show has become the largest local gathering of the industry," says event director **Jon Perry**.

"A wide range of show-only specials and bargains will be available, together with the usual complement of interactive displays, tips and insider hacks that visitors have come to expect and rely on each year."

The Outback Stage returns, hosting some of the finest and funniest Australian outdoor personalities.

Currently scheduled presenters, include **Jase Andrews** and **Simon Anderson** from All 4 Adventure, 4WD 24/7 hosts **Shaun** and **Graham**, and **Pat Callinan**, who will have vehicles on display from the most recent TV series.

The Proving Ground is one of the longest running highlights of the 4x4 Show.

Presented by the team from Motorama 4X4XMore, it will teach showgoers how to recover a vehicle, provide advice on trip preparation, go off-road on the various terrains, or experience a ride in some exciting new to market vehicles.

Black Snake Productions will put on a series of informative and hands-on shows, teaching visitors how to handle safely some of Australia's deadliest creatures and what to do in emergencies.

A new addition for 2023 will see the team from Girls' Day Out 4WD Edition perform demonstrations across the weekend, running car skill workshops and sharing details of their weekend

away activities.

Established to make women feel comfortable in what is considered a male dominated industry, the Girls Day Out Program, creates and provides a safe space where women can learn all about the great outdoors.

Another innovation is Budget Builds, an interactive activity that will see well known personalities who are experts in their field, building and fitting out vehicles.

Also slated to debut is a Camp Cooking display, where visitors will be treated to various culinary demonstrations and delights.

Returning for its third year, the Show N Shine competition has new look categories and great prizes, with new and old rigs battling for top honours.

Tickets are available exclusively online, with tickets bought before the show begins on March 17 attracting a 15% discount.



BRIDGESTONE CREATES TECH CHECK TO DRIVE CUSTOMER TRUST

Bridgestone Australia has created Tech Check to further build trust between retail customers and its 170 Select Tyre & Auto stores across the country.

Coinciding with the roll-out of the video-based Tech Check platform is a refreshed customer promise from Bridgestone Select Tyre & Auto stores to 'Go With Confidence' through a commitment to transparency.

Through a Bridgestone Tech Check SMS, customers will receive a 60-second video directly from the technician working on their car with an upfront condition report.

And they'll be able to get an expert mechanic's commented viewpoint of their vehicle, highlighting what needs repairing now, and what can wait.

Bridgestone Australia retail operations general manager **Jon Tamblyn** says the platform is centred around giving customers knowledge, transparency and continuing to build trust between stores and their customers.

"Many consumers enter the car maintenance process feeling pretty nervous. Will they be looked after? And who can they trust?," Tamblyn says.

"The roll-out of the Bridgestone Tech

Check addresses these questions because we're taking the time to show motorists a view first-hand and build that trust through transparency.

"And (we're) providing a way for them to see and even share the video if they want another opinion," he says.

"Tech Check has been extensively trialled within the network for the past two years, with more than 100,000 videos produced and the feedback we've received from our customer has been overwhelmingly positive.

"It's giving them the knowledge to make informed decisions about the maintenance of their vehicles and left them feeling confident that they can trust our advice. Seeing really is believing."

Tech Check is the latest addition to initiatives that provide confidence to motorists at Bridgestone Select Tyre & Auto.

The initiatives include the Bridgestone Benefits program, Road Hazard Warranty, Tyre Price Promise, and Bridgestone's reputation as Australia's Most Trusted Tyre Brand in the annual Reader's Digest awards.

The Bridgestone Select model was launched in 2006 with the intention of setting Bridgestone stores apart

with a more welcoming showroom, and a focus on building trust through transparency.

Built on its foundation as a tyre retailer, Bridgestone Select expanded into offering mechanical and auto servicing in 2010.

It has continued to strengthen its reputation, winning multiple awards for customer service, including Canstar Blue's Most Satisfied Customer award, and Reader's Digest Quality Service Awards in both the tyre retailer and independent car servicing categories.

Bridgestone Australia and New Zealand managing director **Heath Barclay** says the launch of Tech Check is another way that the Bridgestone Select channel is setting itself apart.

"Since its inception, Bridgestone Select Tyre & Auto has strived to be different to the industry, building a reputation for convenience, value, transparency and trust.

"Tech Check is another way that Bridgestone delivers on customer needs," Barclay says.

"Our aim is to make tyre and mechanical servicing simpler, easier to understand and more transparent."

AUTOCARE TRAINING CONVENTION IN JUNE

Automotive technicians can fast-track their technical, diagnostic and EV service skills by attending Autocare, a comprehensive training event for the aftermarket industry.

The two-day event on June 9 and 10 at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre will host hundreds of technicians and apprentices.

The comprehensive technical training program at Autocare 2023 will cover the most in-demand technical topics, says the Australian Automotive Aftermarket Association (AAAA).

Sessions include hybrid and EV servicing, Pass Thru technology, EV safety, high-voltage battery management, oscilloscopes, sensor and component testing, EGR systems, fuel injection systems, exhaust after-treatment, and diesel specific diagnostics.

"Modern vehicles are incredibly complex, with dozens of sensors and electronic control units and modules

for safety systems, vehicle operation, pollution control and occupant comfort," says The Automotive Technician technical editor and director **Jeff Smit**.

"EVs add another dimension to this complexity.

"Autocare will provide technicians with the understanding and skills to diagnose, service and repair these modern vehicle systems methodically, safely, and efficiently."

Technicians at Autocare will be trained by handpicked, highly respected technical trainers from the US and Australia, representing the largest collection of expert technical trainers ever assembled under one roof in Australia.

"Attending Autocare will be an important investment in your career and make your job as a technician easier and more enjoyable thanks to new diagnosis capabilities and specialist skills," says AAAA chief



executive **Stuart Charity**.

The Autocare Technical Training Program is complemented by a workshop management program for workshop owners and managers looking for the latest research, trends and management techniques.

A Trade Show has more than 100 brands, a careers hub, training stage and networking event to complement the training programs.

AUTOMOTIVE ACCESSORY FITTING QUALIFICATION LAUNCHED

The MTA Institute is expanding its automotive training courses in 2023, with the AUR22021 Certificate II in Automotive Accessory Fitting traineeship from late March 2023.

The qualification will deliver knowledge and skills in fitting/ installing and replacing automotive accessories in accordance with Australian Design Rules and Vehicle Standard Bulleting requirements.

As a provider of automotive training in Queensland, the MTA Institute is the first Registered Training Organisation (RTO) to offer this traineeship in Queensland.

"We're always looking for opportunities to grow and bring new skills to the industry, particularly now at a time where skills and labour are in such high demand," says MTA Institute director **Marcello Riotto**.

"The expansion of new training



areas is of utmost importance to the MTA Institute, and we (believe) the Certificate II in Automotive Accessory Fitting...will lead to some fantastic outcomes for industry," he says.

With a team of experienced technical

trainers located across Queensland, Riotto says the MTA Institute is well-placed to deliver training to all workshops and businesses statewide.



GATES AUSTRALIA SUPPORTS APPRENTICES WITH SUPERCARS EXPERIENCE

Gates Australia says apprentice mechanics are the future of the automotive industry, but a recent survey shows many of them leave in their third year.

So, it has devised the Gates Australia Apprentice program to reward young apprentices and demonstrate that there's more to the industry than just the daily grind.

During 2022, a pilot program was launched in partnership with Repco Authorised Service (RAS), where apprentice mechanics were encouraged to submit a short video explaining why they decided to become a mechanic.

Winning submissions were rewarded with a VIP Supercars experience at the Gold Coast 500 race meeting.

The apprentices received full corporate hospitality in the Penrite Racing suite, including Supercar driver meet-and-greets, pit tours and team merchandise packs.

After the success of the initial pilot, Gates launched the same program with RAS apprentices in South Australia.

With the buzz generated by the Gold

Coast contest, videos rolled in, which Gates shared on its social media channels.

SA apprentices were treated to a day at the Adelaide 500 street race, the final round of Supercars calendar.

One apprentice also got the opportunity to experience a hot lap of the track in the Ford Mustang Safety Car.

Following the success of the promotion, Gates will run the program during 2023 with winning apprentices having the opportunity to attend the Newcastle 500, Melbourne GP, Perth SuperSprint, Tasmania SuperSprint, and Darwin Triple Crown Supercar events.

Gates will also launch a Bathurst 1000 experience, with all video submissions putting apprentices in the running to win a spot to attend the Great Race as a guest.

"The idea for this program evolved from an initial approach by a RAS business specialist who was looking to take some apprentices to the Gold Coast 500 event as part of the RAS workforce development initiatives and hoped Gates may be able to assist with some merchandise or general admission

ticketing," says Gates Australia marketing manager **Priscilla Robb**.

"From there we've turned this into a national program to recognize, reward and educate the apprentices who are the future of the automotive aftermarket.

"Being able to host the apprentice provides Gates the opportunity to educate and promote our brand at the grass root levels, and it's so rewarding to see many of them experiencing the excitement of a Supercars event in a corporate suite," Robb says.

RAS program national manager **Peter Rogers**, who is also a board member of the Australian Automotive Aftermarket Association, says the skills shortage is "a critical issue, and we are actively seeking initiatives and partnerships that will help enhance our workforce".

"From a simple request for help, Gates have stepped up to throw their full support behind our efforts and we're extremely grateful for their ongoing commitment to RAS and to the trade more broadly," he adds.



MARCH SHOWROOM ARRIVAL FOR GR COROLLA

Toyota Australia has secured 700 high-performance GR Corolla GTSS for sale in the first year.

Selling for \$62,300 plus on-road costs, the hot Corolla joins the GR86, GR Supra and GR Yaris in the Toyota Gazoo Racing range.

It will be joined in coming months by the Morizo Edition, of which 25 will be available priced from \$77,800.

Based on the Corolla hatch, the GR Corolla is underpinned by the TNGA-C platform, retuned for high-performance driving.

It has a turbocharged petrol engine, all-wheel drive, wider track front and rear, and completely overhauled suspension.

The engine is the same high-output 1.6-litre turbocharged three-cylinder found in the GR Yaris, retuned to produce 221kW at 6500rpm and 370Nm of torque between 3000 and 5550rpm.

The improved output has been achieved by fitting a triple-exit exhaust which reduces back pressure, reinforced pistons and exhaust valves, and increased capacity for the direct-injection fuel pump and engine oil cooler.

All GR Corollas have a close-ratio six-speed manual gearbox with intelligent rev-matching technology.

The forthcoming Morizo Edition has an extra 30Nm of torque which tighter gear ratios make better use of.

The Corolla employs the GR-FOUR all-wheel drive system with Torsen limited-slip differentials on front

and rear axles for optimal torque distribution.

Optimised suspension geometry, extensive chassis reinforcements, weight reduction and dedicated ventilated disc brakes are standard and the Morizo is even lighter and stronger.

Both variants get unique front and rear bumpers to accommodate the wider track, additional air ducts to improve aerodynamics and cooling, a raised bonnet and unique 18-inch alloy wheels shod with high-performance Yokohama tyres.

Morizos get exclusive 18-inch BBS forged, dark silver alloys with Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres; and a carbon-fibre reinforced polymer (CFRP) roof that cuts overall weight and lowers the centre of gravity.

Inside, all versions get aluminium pedals, manual parking brake and a leather-wrapped steering wheel.

Connectivity is improved with an 8.0-inch touchscreen display housing the latest Toyota multimedia system including Toyota Connected Services.

There's a fully digital 12.3-inch multi-information display and colour head-up display.

The touchscreen is compatible with wired Android Auto and wireless Apple CarPlay, features DAB+ digital radio and satellite navigation, and offers improved usability and voice recognition.

Seats have suede and synthetic leather upholstery with contrast silver stitching. The 60:40 split-fold rear seats is

removed on the Morizo to save weight, and it has unique bucket front seats with contrast red stitching, red seatbelts, and suede-covered steering wheel rim, gear lever and parking brake handle.

The GR gets Toyota Safety Sense active safety technology and features including intersection turn assist made available by improved camera and radar sensors.

GTS grades have a choice of four exterior colours: Glacier White, Ebony, Liquid Mercury metallic, and Feverish Red mica metallic.

The Morizo Edition will be available in Frosted White pearl, Tarmac Black metallic, or Matte Steel.

The GR Corolla is covered by Toyota Warranty Advantage, which offers up to five-year unlimited kilometre coverage extending to seven-years on engine and driveline.

There are also capped-price servicing for the first three years/60,000km with each six-month/10,000km service costing \$300.

Toyota Australia vice president sales, marketing and franchise operations **Sean Hanley** says the GR Corolla's arrival is a landmark occasion.

"For decades Corolla has been one of Australia's most-loved models, selling 1.5 million units after arriving in 1967.

"Motorsport has long been a part of Corolla's DNA, so to have a fully-fledged hot hatch version of our venerable small car is a huge thrill."

FIRST DRIVE: IS IT AN EV? E-POWER BRINGS EV DRIVE, WITHOUT THE BATTERY

BY RICHARD EDWARDS

Nissan has rolled out its new generation e-Power with e-4orce drivetrain in New Zealand, with drivability trumping other factors in the brand's move to electrification.

Unlike conventional hybrid systems, Nissan's innovative e-POWER technology delivers a constant EV-like drive experience, thanks to the driven wheels being powered only by the electric motors, so response is always instant, linear and smooth.

Nissan management admit the vehicle remains a stepping stone to full electric vehicles, and the Ariya electric SUV remains on its way to NZ, but for now it may be an option for some wanting to experience some of the EV advantages.

"This is a true best-of-both world's solution, delivering the smooth and immediate acceleration of an EV, only without ever needing to plug in," says Nissan New Zealand Managing Director Ben Hamilton.

"The Nissan X-Trail e-POWER with e-4ORCE isn't an evolution of an ICE powertrain, it's a true bridge to Nissan's fully electrified BEVs, like the LEAF or Ariya, delivering an EV-like drive experience, along with the confidence to travel as far as you need to.

Designed to act as flagship models in the X-Trail range, the e-POWER with e-4ORCE powertrain is available on the generously equipped X-Trail ST-L and Ti-L trim levels. While two-wheel-drive versions are available overseas, New Zealand will exclusively take e-4ORCE twin-motor all-wheel-drive variants, in keeping with the model's flagship standing in the X-Trail range.

The electrified X-Trail family begins with the ST-L e-POWER with e-4ORCE (\$62,990), followed by the top-of-the-range X-Trail Ti-L e-POWER with e-4ORCE (\$66,990). Both are offered five-seat only, skipping the seven-seat format offered in some petrol models.

Auto Media Group was lucky enough to be part of a select group of motoring media that attended the launch of the ePower system in Australia, and got the chance to sit down with Adam Robertson, deputy director of the Nissan Technical Centre Europe and a leading figure in the setup of ePower.

He says Nissan's approach with ePower is to provide the electric vehicle driving experience.

"This drives like an EV. And we know from our EV customers that people love it. EVs have the highest level of



satisfaction for the way they drive," Robertson explains. "We know the traditional hybrids have the lowest level of satisfaction."

What he is referring to there is the 'rubber band' like disconnection of engine revs to progress experienced with other hybrid systems.

"We wanted to avoid the very disconnected, CVT-like sound you get from some hybrids."

It is potentially not as efficient, however, with its 6.1-litres per 100km fuel economy rating lagging behind that of the Toyota RAV4's 4.8-litre figure – though a Nissan exec at the event questioned if the Toyota figure was as reliable as Nissans.

RightCar suggests the car is neutral under the Clean Car Discount Scheme.

To be fair to Nissan, we drove a challenging rural 300km route on the launch, with consumption pegging itself to 7-litres per 100km. This is impressive for the environment and closer to test cycle figures than we would usually expect.

The X-Trail's e-POWER with e-4ORCE system is comprised of a 2.1kWh battery integrated with a turbo-petrol engine, power generator, inverter and twin electric motors (150kW front axle, 100kW rear axle). Total system output is 157kW.

The engine is compact and lightweight, and is engineered to deliver high torque from low RPMs. The X-Trail's 1.5-litre turbo-petrol three cylinder engine acts as the perfect generator. Under heavy acceleration, and when the battery is low, the petrol engine will deliver power not just to the battery, but to the electric motors, ensuring consistent acceleration no matter the battery status or driving conditions.

Thanks to the pure electric motor drive,

there is no delay as with an internal combustion engine or traditional hybrid. Throttle response is instant. A 'linear linear tune, which governs the operation of the petrol engine, ensuring that it's spinning at an appropriate speed relative to road speed, avoiding the "rev-up" effect of traditional hybrids under hard acceleration. It can run very short distances as an EV.

The electric nature of the drivetrain makes the all-wheel drive system incredibly responsive – up to 10,000 times faster than a mechanical 4WD system. In addition, the constant torque redistribution, including torque vectoring side to side, and near-perfect weight balance contribute to reassuring handling and ride comfort.

It really is impressive to drive, with twisty hinterland roads and mixed surfaces failing to catch out the system. Despite weighing in at over 1.9 tonnes, the X-Trail is now one of the more engaging and capable drives in the segment with this drivetrain.

The system takes a little getting used to as unlike other similar systems it mechanically moves the brake pedal to match the feel it would provide.

Aside from the drivetrain, the two e-POWER models otherwise echo the standard X-Trail's that are already finding favour with consumers. They offer a solid family-SUV experience, with the now-expected huge LED screens, up to 12.3-inches, the segment's largest heads-up display, a solid suite of driver assistance features under the ProPilot title, and much more.

The question will be whether buyers, and dealers, can convince themselves the drivability is worth it over the efficiency.



FORD RANGER

BEST FEBRUARY NEW CAR SALES IN FOUR YEARS

Australia's automotive industry delivered 86,878 vehicles during February 2023.

That's a 1.8% increase (1538 units) on the same period in 2022 (85,340) during the same number of selling days (24) – an increase of 64.1 vehicle sales per day.

"This is the best February result since 2019. It's particularly pleasing given global and domestic supply constraints," says Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI) chief executive **Tony Weber**.

Battery electric vehicles (BEVs) accounted for 6.8% of sales with 5932 sold in February.

Zero- and low-emission vehicle sales, which includes battery electric, hybrid and plug-in hybrid vehicles (PHEVs) accounted for 13.9% (12,102).

However, Weber says that if Australia wants to accelerate the transition to a broader range of consumers in all parts of the country, Australia needs to adopt a fuel efficiency standard.

About 13,625 vehicles were sourced from China, making it the third highest country of origin for new vehicles in February.

Japan remains the largest source of new vehicles in the Australian market (24,805), followed by Thailand (18,557), with Korea fourth (12,246).

Toyota led the market with 14,332

vehicles sold, with **Mazda** second (7667), followed by **Ford** (6022), **Kia** (6000) and **Hyundai** (5504).

The margin over **Mazda** for **Toyota** was 6665 vehicle sales and 7.7 market share points.

The **Ford Ranger** was the highest selling model with 4473 sales, ahead of Toyota's **HiLux** (3939), Tesla's **Model 3** (2671), Mazda's **CX-5** (2600), and Mitsubishi's **Outlander** (2166).

Rounding out the top 10 models were the Toyota **RAV4**, MG **ZS**, Isuzu Ute **D-Max**, Toyota **Landcruiser**, and Subaru **Forester**.

Australian Capital Territory new vehicle sales increased by 7.2% with 1454 vehicles sold.

Also up were New South Wales 4.7% (27,600), Northern Territory 2.8% (725) and Western Australia, 16.7% (9815).

Queensland sales decreased by 2.8% (18,427), South Australia 4.5% (5549), Tasmania 9.4% (1414), and Victoria 1.3% (21,894).

The passenger vehicle market is up by 750 vehicle sales (4.8%) over the same month last year.

The SUV market is up by 2953 vehicle sales (6.6%), the light commercial market is down by 2959 vehicle sales (-13.6%) and the heavy commercial vehicle market is up by 794 sales (26.4%) versus February 2022.

TOP 10 BRANDS



1. TOYOTA 14,332



2. MAZDA 7667



3. FORD 6022



4. KIA 6000



5. HYUNDAI 5504

4X4 UTES



1. Ford Ranger
3782



2. Toyota Hilux
2877



3. Isuzu Ute D-Max
1593



4. Mitsubishi Triton
1185



5. Mazda BT-50
1090



6. Toyota Landcruiser
761



7. LDV T60/T60 MAX
752



8. GWM Ute
715



9. Nissan Navara
524



10. Ssangyong Musso
323

SUV SMALL <\$40K



1. MG ZS
2047



2. Mitsubishi ASX
823



3. GWN Haval Jolion
813



4. Nissan Qashqai
682



5. Volkswagen T-Roc
661



6. Hyundai Kona
659



7. Mitsubishi ASX
642



8. Kia Seltos
623



9. Toyota Corolla
Cross
511



10. Mazda CX-30
481

TOP 10 BRANDS



6. MITSUBISHI 5500



7. MG 4363



8. SUBARU 4054



9. TESLA 3516



10. ISUZU UTE 3156



EVS HELP DRIVE FEBRUARY NEW CAR SALES

Electrics are outpacing all other fuel forms in Australian new vehicle sale growth rates, Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI) figures show.

About 5932 battery electric vehicles (BEVs) were sold in February this year compared to 600 for the same month in 2022 – an 888.7% rise.

Petrol-powered vehicle sales rose just 2% in February to 44,528 while diesel and hybrids were down 10.3% (26,443) and 29.8% (5716) respectively.

"Growing sales of electric vehicles proves that where a battery electric product exists which suits the driving habits, needs and finances of Australian motorists, they'll purchase these vehicles," says FCAI chief executive **Tony Weber**.

Zero- and low-emission vehicle sales, which include battery electric, hybrid and plug-in hybrids (PHEVs) accounted for 13.9% (12,102).

"The number of low-emission vehicle sales demonstrates that there's an appetite among Australians for environmentally friendly vehicles," Weber say, adding that Australia must adopt a fuel efficiency standard if it wants to accelerate the transition to a broader range of consumers.

Though Japan remains the largest source of new vehicles in the Australian market (24,805), followed by Thailand (18,557), China provided 13,625 vehicles, making it the third highest country of origin for Australian new vehicles in February.

Chinese cars include the BYD Atto 3, and most Australian Tesla **Model Y** and

Model 3 EVs come from Giga Shanghai in China.

In fact, the Tesla **Model 3** was third on the list of the highest selling models in Australia in February with 2671 sales.

Meanwhile, an EV Index has been launched by the Australian Automobile Association (AAA).

It says the new online dashboard brings together seven different data sets describing the technical transition of Australia's vehicle fleet.

The EV Index shows how many EVs are being sold, which manufacturers and vehicle types are attracting consumer attention, geographic distribution of EV registrations, vehicle specifications, and international list prices for 26 representative vehicles.

The AAA has designed the EV Index as a tool to provide unbiased, credible,

and up-to-date data on EV options and patterns of take-up.

It's free to use and will help potential EV buyers to narrow their choices to vehicles that best suit their individual needs, says the AAA.

"It'll also be a valuable resource for businesses, policy makers, motoring enthusiasts and anyone wanting more information about the transition of Australia's vehicle fleet."

The EV Index covers sales patterns of light vehicles of all types, battery electric vehicles (BEVs), plug-in hybrids (PHEVs), conventional hybrids, hydrogen fuel cell EVs (FCEVs), and vehicles with internal combustion engines (ICE).

Visit EV Index – AAA – Data Dashboard for more information.

ELECTRIC, PHEV AND HYBRID SALES					FEBRUARY 2023			
Total Market	Month		YTD		Variance +/- Vol. & %			
	2023	2022	2023	2022	MTH	YTD	MTH	YTD
ELECTRIC								
Passenger Private	3,059	165	6,290	285	2,894	6,005	>999%	>999%
SUV Private	2,865	433	4,482	933	2,432	3,549	561.7%	380.4%
Light Commercial Non-Private	8	2	12	2	6	10	300.0%	500.0%
Sub Total	5,932	600	10,784	1,220	5,332	9,564	888.7%	783.9%
HYBRID								
Passenger Private	1,353	2,402	2,629	4,700	-1,049	-2,071	-43.7%	-44.1%
SUV Private	4,363	5,741	8,223	8,407	-1,378	-184	-24.0%	-2.2%
Sub Total	5,716	8,143	10,852	13,107	-2,427	-2,255	-29.8%	-17.2%
PHEV								
Passenger Private	19	30	44	54	-11	-10	-36.7%	-18.5%
SUV Private	435	275	848	566	160	282	58.2%	49.8%
Sub Total	454	305	892	620	149	272	48.9%	43.9%
TOTAL	12,102	9,048	22,528	14,947	3,054	7,581	33.8%	50.7%